

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-198—SB 217

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Education Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF SERVICE MEMBERS

SUMMARY: This act requires any child age five to 18 enrolled in a public or private school to be granted 10 days of excused absences (presumably in addition to what is already allowed, see BACKGROUND) in any school year if his or her parent or legal guardian is an active-duty U.S. Armed Forces member who (1) has been called for, (2) is on leave from, or (3) has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat-support posting. It also allows local or regional boards of education to grant such students additional excused absences to visit their parents or legal guardian.

It is unclear whether the existing truancy law applies to private school students, but the act specifically applies its excused absences provision to private school students. Thus, it appears the act applies to private school students.

Under the act, the student and parent or legal guardian are responsible for (1) getting assignments from the student's teacher before the absence and (2) ensuring the assignments are completed before the student returns to school.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

BACKGROUND

Armed Forces

By law, the "armed forces" means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any reserve component of these branches, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (CGS § 27-103).

Unexcused and Excused Absences

By law, students are allowed up to three unexcused absences in a month or up to nine unexcused absences in a school year before they are considered truants.

According to the State Board of Education's definitions of excused and unexcused absences, an absence is considered excused if:

1. for absences one through nine, the student provides written documentation (i.e., a signed note from parent or guardian) of the reason for the absence submitted within 10 school days after returning to school and
2. for the 10th and any additional absences, the student provides the same written documentation giving one of the following reasons for the

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absence: (a) the student's illness (with appropriate verification from a medical professional), (b) observance of a religious holiday, (c) death in the family or other emergency beyond the family's control, (d) mandated court appearance, (e) lack of transportation that the district normally provides, or (f) extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district in accordance with State Department of Education guidance.

An absence is considered unexcused unless it meets one of the definitions of an excused absence or is a disciplinary absence. All other absences are unexcused.

OLR Tracking: DC:MK:JKL:ts